

VZCZCXRO7372  
PP RUEHAG RUEHROV  
DE RUEHCV #1556/01 3151041  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 101041Z NOV 08  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2113  
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 001556

SIPDIS

USSOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD  
DEPARTMENT PASS TO AID/OTI (RPORTER)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/06/2018  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [VE](#)  
SUBJECT: GBRV REACTION TO OBAMA WIN CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC

REF: CARACAS 1535

CARACAS 00001556 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Political Counselor Francisco Fernandez,  
Reason 1.4 (D)

11. (C) Summary: Official reaction to President-elect Obama's victory following the U.S. election continues to be optimistic, yet tempered. Foreign Minister Nicolas Maduro sent positive signals November 5 about establishing new ties with Washington, although he added that the GBRV is neither "hurried or desperate." National Assembly Deputies congratulated President-Elect Obama in a resolution, but simultaneously exhorted the USG to restore full trade relations with Cuba, to close Guantanamo Bay, and withdraw U.S. troops from Iraq and Afghanistan. The head of the National Assembly Foreign Affairs Commission expressed hopes for a meeting soon between President-Elect Obama and President Chavez. Chavez's virulent anti-Americanism remains popular only with his most radical supporters and Senator Obama's electoral victory has been widely hailed in Venezuela. Senior GBRV officials may be declaring a new, albeit conditional, openness to the United States to position themselves better in the run-up to the November 23 state and local elections. End Summary.

-----  
Changing the Tone  
-----

12. (SBU) Following up on the November 5 MFA communiqu  (Reftel), Foreign Minister Nicolas Maduro, on the margins of a Caracas meeting of Venezuelan-Russian bi-national commissions, told reporters, "It appears as if the moment to establish a constructive agenda and to establish new relations between the US and Latin America has arrived." When asked whether the expelled U.S. Ambassador would be returning to Venezuela now that Obama had won, Maduro responded, "Everything has its moment." He told reporters that the GBRV is neither "hurried nor desperate," but said the GBRV would work to ensure that relations evolve in a positive direction. Maduro said, "We have not given up hope that by respecting sovereignty and treating each other as equals, we can improve our relations with the US."

-----  
National Assembly Weighs In  
-----

13. (SBU) The National Assembly approved a November 6 resolution congratulating President-elect Obama on his victory and the American people for "choosing change." The same resolution, however, also called for an immediate end to

the embargo of Cuba, the withdrawal of all troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, and the dismantling of the border fence along the U.S.- Mexican border as well as the "the concentration camp at Guantanamo Bay." The resolution passed unanimously, although eight NA Deputies abstained, including Communist Party (PCV) leader Oscar Figueroa. Figueroa commented, "While we agree with the demand to eliminate Guantanamo and the illegal prisons around the world, we want to clearly signal that the USA is an imperialist nation made up of multi-national interests, for us it isn't important whether they are black or white." Following the vote National Assembly Deputies Carlos Escarra, Tomas Sanchez and Luis Diaz told the media, "The Empire is still the Empire."

-----  
Possible Agenda Items  
-----

¶4. (SBU) During a November 6 interview with local media, President of the National Assembly's Commission on Foreign Affairs Roy Daza commented that any (future) meeting between President-elect Barack Obama and President Hugo Chavez would occur "much quicker than most people think." (Note: Post has received no official request for any meeting between President-elect Obama and President Chavez. End Note). Daza specifically mentioned financial, energy, food, and ecology "crises," as well as UN reform as possible bilateral agenda items. Danza added that "The workers, women, and minorities of the United States have seen the revolutionary process and the democracy that is occurring across South America." National Assembly Deputy and member of the US - Venezuela Friendship Group Deputy Calixto Ortega told opposition-oriented cable TV network Globovision the same day that "Obama would not be a warrior or an invader like current President George W. Bush and that he will abandon the

CARACAS 00001556 002.2 OF 002

imperialist attitude of the past."

-----  
Heralding Change  
-----

¶5. (SBU) The pro-government daily VEA newspaper in its November 7 editorial hailed the election of President-elect Barack Obama. "The American Public voted for dialogue and peaceful solutions over the interventionist attitudes and permanent aggression of George W. Bush," commented VEA. The editorial, however, noted "It is impossible to forget for an instant that power in the U.S. is due to the decisive influence of financiers and the military." VEA reporting following the U.S. election emphasized that the American people voted for change, hope, peace, racial equality, and dialogue, concluding that "without a doubt, the result of the U.S. elections communicate to the revolutionaries of Venezuela and the world that peace, socialism, and independence should be maintained."

-----  
Comment  
-----

¶6. (C) Official Venezuelan reaction to President-Elect Obama's victory so far strikes optimistic, but tempered, notes. President Chavez has a long history of ascribing blame for Venezuela's domestic problems on the United States and using the supposed threat of U.S. intervention to justify limits on civil liberties. He is suddenly hard-pressed to remain hard-line, at least in the short term. Local polls show that Chavez's virulent anti-Americanism is not playing well beyond his most radical supporters, and Senator Obama's electoral victory is being widely hailed in Venezuela, including among Chavez's base. Nevertheless, GBRV leaders are carefully couching and conditioning any bilateral rapprochement on a series of actions the USG needs to take, rather than reassessing their own foreign and domestic

policies.

CAULFIELD